

SENATE BILL REPORT

HB 1487

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Transportation, February 25, 1998

Title: An act relating to transportation planning.

Brief Description: Enhancing transportation planning.

Sponsors: Representatives K. Schmidt, Fisher, Mitchell and Hankins.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Transportation: 4/3/97, 4/7/97 [DP, DNP]; 2/24/98, 2/25/98 [DPA, DNP].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: Do pass as amended.

Signed by Senators Prince, Chair; Benton, Vice Chair; Wood, Vice Chair; Goings, Haugen, Horn, Jacobsen, Morton, Oke, Prentice, Rasmussen and Sellar.

Minority Report: Do not pass.

Signed by Senator Patterson.

Staff: Ashley Probart (786-7319)

Background: A number of unanswered questions exist regarding the treatment of state-owned transportation facilities in city and county comprehensive plans and development regulations which are required by the state's Growth Management Act (GMA).

Linking transportation and land use decisions is cited as a goal of the GMA. For example, the GMA provides that development should be encouraged "... in urban areas where adequate public facilities and services exist or can be provided in an efficient manner." However, how this linkage is to be achieved with regard to state-owned transportation facilities is unclear.

The measurement commonly used in transportation to determine adequacy is the level of service (LOS) standard. LOS is an engineering formula that measures the flow of traffic on a particular facility. A LOS standard "A" means traffic is free flowing; a LOS standard "F" means traffic is at a standstill.

Cities and counties planning under the GMA are required to develop LOS standards for all arterials and transit routes. Some local jurisdictions have interpreted "arterial" to include state-owned transportation facilities while others have not.

Determining LOS standard establishes the benchmark for determining whether or not the transportation facilities are adequate to support development.

The "concurrency" provision of the GMA states, in part, "... local jurisdictions must adopt and enforce ordinances which prohibit development approval if the development causes the level of service on a transportation facility to decline below the standards adopted in the transportation element of the comprehensive plan, unless transportation improvements or strategies to accommodate the impacts of development are made concurrent with the development."

The 1994 Legislature approved a study to address how state transportation facilities should be treated in local comprehensive plans. Representatives from cities, counties, ports, regional transportation planning organizations, the Department of Transportation, the Department of Community, Trade, and Economic Development, the private sector, and the Legislative Transportation Committee participated. The study, with recommendations, was completed in January 1995.

Summary of Amended Bill: By December 31, 2000, cities and counties planning under the Growth Management Act are required to include state-owned transportation facilities in the transportation element of their comprehensive plans.

The Department of Transportation (DOT), in consultation with local governments, is authorized to set LOS standards for state highways and state ferry routes of statewide significance. Setting LOS standards for all other state-owned transportation facilities continues to be performed by regional transportation planning organizations jointly with DOT.

Island counties are required to have state ferries and state highways in their comprehensive plans. These state facilities are required to meet local plan concurrency requirements.

Regional transportation planning organizations are required to work with cities, counties, transit agencies, DOT, and others to develop LOS standards or alternative transportation performance measures.

Transportation facilities of statewide significance are set forth. These include the interstate; interregional state principal arterials, including ferry connections that serve statewide travel; intercity passenger rail services; intercity high-speed ground transportation; major passenger intermodal terminals, excluding all airport facilities and services; the freight railroad system; the Columbia/Snake navigable river system; marine port facilities and services that are related solely to marine activities affecting international and interstate trade; and high-capacity transportation systems.

The Transportation Commission must designate state highways of statewide significance and submit a list of such facilities for adoption by the 1999 Legislature.

Transportation facilities of statewide significance are deemed essential public facilities under the GMA.

The Transportation Commission must give higher priority to correcting identified deficiencies on transportation facilities of statewide significance.

Amended Bill Compared to Original Bill: Island counties are required to have state ferries and state highways in their comprehensive plans. These state facilities are required to meet local plan concurrency requirements.

Technical amendments are made that adjust original effective dates.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: The bill contains several effective dates. Please refer to the bill.

Testimony For: This bill represents a reasonable next step in linking transportation and land use. The bill promotes local, state, and international transportation system continuity.

Testimony Against: Adequate mitigation needs to be provided for local communities to curtail the negative impacts from transportation facilities of statewide significance, for example, the intermodal rail switching yard in the city of Auburn. Provisions for interjurisdictional provision of transit services should be added to this bill.

Testified: PRO: Craig Olson, Association of Washington Cities; Scott Taylor, WA Public Ports Association; Charlie Howard, Department of Transportation; Patricia Otley, Burlington Northern Santa Fe; CON: Lisa Clausen, City of Auburn.